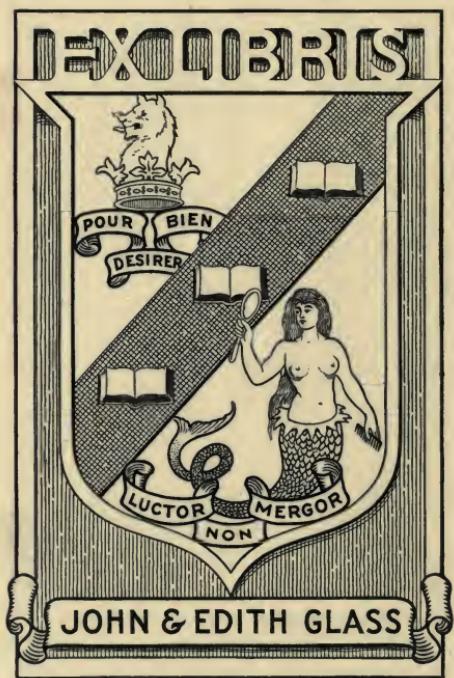


HEINRICH HEINE

MICHAEL MONAHAN

2239.2
V55
1911m



Village Poems 7⁵⁰

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Yours sincerely
Michael Monahan

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by

MICHAEL MONAHAN



New York and London
MITCHELL KENNERLEY
1911

HEINRICH HEINE

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ЭИЛН НОЛАН

To my friend
RUDOLPH J. SCHAEFER

HEINRICH HEINE

“LUDWIG VON
HEINRICH HEINE

A FANTASY



ADAME, if you ask me who is my favorite Poet, I who can deny you nothing, must answer truly, he is none of my own race. Rare are the singers of Erin, Madame, and their Castalia is a fountain of tears: who-so drinks of its sweet sorrow shall never be happy again. Like the fated one who has heard the Banshee's wail, that soul shall in the midst of joy feel the near presence of calamity, a boding at the heart which nothing can silence. This precious blue flower of sorrow is proper to the poets of my beloved Erin. It would not flourish under less tender and humid skies, for it is born of the rainbow of her smiles and tears.

But, Madame, I have from my youth read a mort o' poetry, and have even written a little myself—indif-ferent bad, I may admit without a qualm, since the sin was committed long ago and you were the dear occa-sion of it. Alas! perhaps it had been better for my peace of mind had I followed the counsel of my old priestly instructors, "to avoid all occasions of sin."

You know, Madame, that the making of poetry is no longer in fashion, for many reasons, but chiefly be-cause the present age is too banal to inspire or receive it. Meantime we have to deal with prose, or verse

that is jejune and vain. Have we not good reason to love our sainted Heinrich, whose prose is better than most English poetry? In truth, if we had not a line of his verse, his prose, brilliant, various, alive with rare imagery, sparkling with the treasures of the richest fancy ever given to poet, would serve to crown him with bays unfading. True, as he himself said of the gentle *Antommarchi*, it is a stiletto rather than a style: but what a relief after the divine heaviness of Goethe! He struck fiercely, did our Heinrich, though often he wounded his own breast; and how deep was his gift of tears! What he said of another is truer still of himself: "He was the petted darling of the pale Goddess of Tragedy. Once in a fit of wild tenderness she kissed him as though she would draw his whole heart through his lips with one long, passionate kiss. The heart began to bleed, and suddenly understood all the sorrows of this world, and was filled with infinite sympathy."

To know our Heine, Madame, is to renew one's faith in the old Greek mythology—a system in which the aristocracy of mind is finely manifest—and to worship Nature as she was worshipped in the antique world. Nay, this modern Heinrich Heine was but an avatar of the old Hermes—you see, Madame, the initial letter is the same and yet the discovery is original with me! Heine himself took little care to cloak his

divine origin. Life and light and love, while they were granted to him, these were the elements of his religion. Early and late he paid his vows to Venus. His voice was a protest harking back to old Olympus against the new Religion of Pain. Much pain he came to suffer himself, perhaps through the malice of the later Dispensation; but he died as he had lived, a son of the gods. Surely the immortal mind was never stronger in him than when from his "mattress grave," where he lay half blind and paralyzed, his unconquered spirit sent forth this message, matchless in its pathos and irony:

"What avails it me that enthusiastic youths and maidens crown my marble bust with laurel, when the withered hands of an aged nurse are pressing a poultice of Spanish flies behind my ears? What avails it me that all the roses of Shiraz glow and waft incense for me? Alas! Shiraz is two thousand miles from the Rue de l'Amsterdam where in the wearisome loneliness of my sick room I get no scent, except it be, perhaps, the perfume of warmed towels. Alas! God's satire weighs heavy on me. The great Author of the Universe, the Aristophanes of Heaven, was bent on demonstrating with crushing force to me the little, earthly, German Aristophanes, how my wittiest sarcasms were only pitiful attempts at jesting in comparison with his, and how miserably I am beneath him in humor, in colossal mockery!"

It is strange, Madame, how godly men pointed the finger of condemnation at the stricken Poet, putting the Christian anathema upon him. Our poor Hermes was having *his* Passion, and the sight of his agonies filled the pietists with rapture. In mediaeval times, still regretted in some centres of Christian instruction as the true ages of faith, there was a breed of zealots called flagellants, who used to run madly over Europe, beating themselves—and murdering the Jews. How little essential change has taken place in the religious spirit! Now Heine hated this spirit with a hatred bequeathed to him by generations of his hunted and suffering race, that is to say, like a Jew; and he also hated it like the true Hellene he was: so it took what revenge it could upon him. The little German princelings who put up conductors on their funny little courts and castles to dodge the lightnings of his wit, also furnished some diversion in kind. For this man had written—

“The people have time enough, they are immortal:
Kings only are mortal.”

“The human spirit has its rights and will not be
rocked to sleep by the lullaby of church bells.”

“Men will no longer be put off with promissory
notes upon Heaven.”

Madame, when I think of my favorite Poet, whom I so love, though of an alien race, there comes to me

a vision which I must put into rude and graceless words—ah, how unworthy of him who has painted it for all time with the iris-hued pencil of fancy! I seem to stand on the banks of the blue Rhine, looking over a fair prospect of vine-covered champaign; quaint villages shining in the cheerful sun, alternating with the umbrage of forest; now and again the river flashing its silver upon the sight;—and still farther beyond, a smiling expanse of flower-decked meadow and plain. But in all that beauteous picture my fancy seeks a little garden, tangled and overgrown with grasses and wild flowers, where the gardener's care has not been felt for many a day. There, in its most neglected and obscure corner, when the moon is risen, I see the cold pure gleam of marble; a broken statue of the antique Venus, fallen from its pedestal and lying half buried under leaves and vines. And see, while I wait, there comes with fearful, faltering step, a boy whose pale young face is fixed with the resolve of a strange passion. Ah me! what ghostly tryst is this? Casting a swift glance around, he flings himself upon his knees beside the fallen Queen of Love and kisses the silent marble lips, murmuring broken words which are not for me to hear. Rising, the solemn stars look upon a face transfigured by destiny and the sacrament of the Ideal.

A nightingale sings

Now I see a youth leaving the gates of an ancient city. With knapsack on shoulder he trudges away joyously, as one to whom life opens its fairest promise. It is the boy of the deserted garden, but older grown, and with a light in his eyes that owes nothing to the flight of years. Gaily he begins his journey, Nature bidding him on with her eternal smile that only the young understand. Oh, never has she companioned a more memorable pilgrim! But soft! the poet's heart within him speaks: "It is the first of May, and spring is pouring a foam of white blossoms like a sea of life over the earth. Green, the color of hope, is everywhere around me. Everywhere flowers are blooming like beautiful miracles, and my heart will bloom again also. This heart is likewise a flower of strange and wondrous sort. It is no modest violet, no smiling rose, no pure lily which a maiden may cherish in her white bosom; which withers today and blooms again tomorrow. No, this heart rather resembles that strange heavy flower from the woods of Brazil which, according to the legend, blooms but once in a century . . . No, Agnes, this flower blooms not often, nor without effort, but now it moves, and swells, and bursts in my bosom . . . My love has burst its bud and shoots upward in eternal dithyrambs of poesy and joy!"

After an interval I see the wayfarer again, pausing at a stately old house in Hamburg, where kind wel-

come is given him; kindest greeting of all by a fair young girl whose dove-like eyes, mirroring a truthful soul, rest upon him with a certain pity. Ah, how he trembles at her most careless touch, how his glance follows her every motion, and when she is passive, rivets itself upon her like a devotee before a shrine!

They are in a deep garden, these two, where the scent of flowers is heavy on the air. It is a sweet hour, breathing yet the full fragrance of a perfect day. But the moon mounting up sends a long arrow of light across the shimmering foliage, touching the girl's pale cheek with the pure glory of marble. The youth has taken her hands while she turns away her head, as if loath to hear his impassioned speech. These words at length float to me on the garden scents, bringing death in life and an immortal despair to one that hears—"I love, I love thee, Cousin Amelie. And what sayest thou to me?"

"Alas, Cousin, it must not be!" . . .

A nightingale sings.

The years take wing with the swiftness of a dream and now I stand in a great hall filled with the trophies of art gathered from all ages and climes to make the priceless spoil of an imperial city. Everywhere the divinity of marble, pulseless and serene, while beyond these sacred walls the din of vulgar life rises impertinent. And lo! there in sovereign state, upon a lofty

pedestal, I see the antique Venus of the neglected garden by the Rhine, where the boy kept his tryst with the Ideal. The divinities make no sign, but well I know her for the same that in old time with many a witching guise succored her mortal son Aeneas.

*Quid natum totiens, crudelis tu quoque,
Falsis ludis imaginibus?*

Her beauteous arms are gone, that erst encircled gods and godlike men, yet as the past was hers, the future shall be also. Time has wrought her this maim, jealous of her superior sway, and she has suffered other wrongs from the barbarians who have sacked Olympus, building upon the ruins of the old fanes their cross-bearing temples that last but a thousand years: yet is she still divinely content, though her shrines have long been dust and Paphos with all its rosy rites is become a name. For her rule endureth ever in the hearts of men.

And if you ask a proof, see now that haggard, broken man who drags himself wearily to the feet of the immortal Goddess. It is he, the youth of long ago, who kissed her marble lips and gave his soul unto her keeping. Alas! how cruelly have the years dealt with him: yet he looks up to her with a rapture of unchanged worship and love. O miracle of faith, in which the finite rises to the infinite, the mortal blends with the immortal!—see how she returns his gaze, with a fulness of divine compassion, as if to say:

"Thou seest I have no arms and may not help thee!"

Then instantly methought the walls and statues
vanished, leaving these two alone in the garden where
I first saw them

And a nightingale sang!

THE POET'S LIFE

HEINRICH HEINE



EINRICH Heine was born December 12, 1799, in the city of Dusseldorf on the Rhine. For a long time the accepted date of his birth was January 1, 1800, and the poet refused to correct the error, saying he was unquestionably one of the first men of the Nineteenth century. Also let it be set down here, he was born a Jew—a statement which would have sounded worse then than it does now, though in this culminating Christian age there is still room for improvement. But let us give thanks—all of us, Jews and Gentiles—we have come a long way!

Heine imbibed in his cradle and during his early years a full share of the *Juden-Schmerz*, the great sorrow of Israel. One of his biographers describes him as “in soul an early Hebrew, in spirit an ancient Greek, in mind a republican of the Nineteenth century.” There is an apostasy to be charged to him—of which we shall speak later on—and it must be admitted that, Jew himself, he did not spare his own race the scorpion sting of his sarcasm. But a Jew he was in his better moods, in his seasons of calm and power; and a Jew he remained to the last. It is good to recall here his noble confession: “The writer of these lines may be proud

that his ancestors came of the noble House of Israel, that he is a descendant of the martyrs who gave a God and a moral code to the world, and who have fought and suffered on every battlefield of thought."

Heine's childish years and boyhood were as happy as those of a poet should be. Of this enchanted period he has left us a characteristic and delightful record. Indeed, he has told us the story so well that no one may presume to tell it after him without borrowing the poet's own words. For the old German Fatherland, however its political systems might provoke his scathing irony, for his native city of Dusseldorf, he kept during his long exile in after years, the tenderest affection. His mind was at home on the Seine; his heart on the Rhine. There, as he wittily said, were seven towns to dispute the honor of being his birthplace—Schilda, Krahwinkel, Polkwitz, Bockum, Dulken, Gottingen and Schoppenstedt. There his poet soul first awoke to life and love and beauty. There he lisped that musical German speech which his genius was to fuse into lyric forms that will keep his memory alive in German hearts so long as the Rhine shall run its course toward the sea.

Heine's father, Samson Heine, was an amiable, handsome man, and the poet always preserved a loving recollection of him; but, like most great men, he was his mother's son. What lover of the poet needs

to be told much of the “old woman who lives by the Dammthor;” or of the mutual love extending over so many years, unchilled, unchanged; or of the tender deception which the stricken poet practised from his mattress-grave, keeping her in ignorance of his awful fate? To me it is the finest chapter in Heine’s life, the one to which we turn for rest when wearied with his constant feuds, brilliantly as he fought them.

Heine’s mother had been a Miss Betty Von Geldern. She might have made a better marriage in a worldly way, but it would hardly have resulted in so good a poet. She deserved well of her gifted son and he of her. She brought him into the world; he immortalized her. Mother Heine lived a hundred years before the New Woman, and yet she made few mistakes. One of these was, however, rather serious—that Heinrich could, would or should be any thing save a poet. Having been well educated herself—she read Latin, I fear, better than the New Woman—Mother Heine followed with eager interest the growth of her son’s mind. “She played the chief part in my development,” he tells us; “she made the programme of all my studies, and, even before my birth, began her plans for my education.” There were other children to divide her care, but her darling was the eldest born, the glory of whose genius she lived to see, and whom at last she followed to the grave.

Literature, regarded as a profession, was held in

small favor by the Heine family, and especially by Uncle Salomon Heine, the great banker of Hamburg, of whom we hear so much in the life-story of the poet. Uncle Salomon, indeed—although he helped Heinrich from time to time and never wholly abandoned him, except in making his will—esteemed the first lyrist of Germany as little better than the fool of the family. There was another uncle on the mother's side, Simon Von Geldern, who seems to have had a literary turn, and who gave the young poet much secret encouragement. Having little money to back his opinions, Uncle Simon was distinctly inferior as a moral force to Uncle Salomon; and, therefore, he for the most part, kept his heretical views to himself. But the Muse of Literary History has done tardy justice to the poor relation, and Uncle Simon Von Geldern will always have his place in the chronicle.

However, I am inclined to think more kindly of Salomon Heine than are some of the poet's biographers. It is scarcely a just cause of reproach that Uncle Salomon, the Jew prince of Hamburg (as he was called) should have rated commercial values so high and literary values so low. He had known the Ghetto, with its privations, its galling humiliations, its degrading stigma of inferiority. Rising at length by his own exertions to wealth and power, it was hardly to be expected that he should view with tolerance the adoption of so un lucrative a pursuit as poetry by a

member of his family. Yet, as I have said, though he looked askance at his scribbling, ne'er-do-well-nephew, he never absolutely gave him the cold shoulder. The provocation was often strong enough, I promise you. Once Heinrich went over to London on a sight-seeing tour, Uncle Salomon furnishing the needful. Besides an allowance for traveling expenses, Uncle Salomon entrusted the poet with a draft for £400, which Heinrich was on no account to cash, but merely to preserve and if need were, exhibit, as establishing the credit of the family. Heinrich never could be got to look at money in that way. His rule through life was to spend his money and every other good thing as soon as he came into possession of it—often indeed, by anticipation; so you may be sure it didn't take him long to realize on the valuable bit of paper. Uncle Salomon was furious, and I fancy many a Christian uncle would not have spared his wrath in a like extremity. To his angry and just reproaches the "fool of the family" coolly answered: "My dear uncle, do you really expect to have to pay nothing for the honor of bearing my name?"

Heine very early felt the French influence which became so controlling an element in his political philosophy and which gave so decided a bent to his literary genius. History put on her seven-league boots while little Heinrich played by the Dussel, or in the

green alleys of the Schlossgarten. Just a month before the poet was born, in the memorable year 1799, his great hero Napoleon had achieved his famous *coup d'état* of the 18th Brumaire. The Revolution knelt before its master, and then history-making proceeded in earnest. In 1806—Heinrich is now seven years old and the First Consul is Emperor—Duke William took leave of the Duchy of Berg and the dashing Joachim Murat entered as Regent. The Rhine Confederation had been formed and the German States beaten one after another. Indeed, so many great events were happening at this time—History paying off her arrears—that a clear head has much ado to follow them in their right order and relation. Happily that is not our present business. Amid all this marching and counter-marching, *allons-ing* and alliancing, bayoneting and bulleting, partitioning and protocolizing, little Heinrich played with his mates in the quaint streets of Dusseldorf, or at home tumbled over his toy castles as merrily as the French armies busy at the same work in kind.

But one never-to-be-forgotten day the statue of the Elector Jan Wilhelm was missed from the town square and the French troops marched in, the “drum-major throwing his gold-knobbed baton as high as the first story,” while the drunken cripple Gumpertz rolled in the gutter, singing:

Ca ira! Ca ira!

A wonderful day that was to the little boy, his eager heart aflame with the new marvel of all this fanfare and soldiering. And wonderful days were to come, listening to Monsieur LeGrand, the French tambour—"so long billeted upon us, who looked like a very devil and yet was such an angelic character and such an incomparable drummer!" We all know how he taught the young Heinrich with his rat-a-tat-tat some lessons of modern history in which he, the brave LeGrand, had borne a part; and we have been glad to learn in our turn. Nay, we may yet hearken with pleasure to the recitals of Monsieur LeGrand.

"I saw the march across the Simplon, the Emperor in front, with the brave Grenadiers climbing up behind, while the startled eagles screamed and the glaciers thundered in the distance; I saw the Emperor clasping the standard on the bridge of Lodi; I saw the Emperor in his gray cloak at Marengo; I saw the Emperor on horseback at the battle of the Pyramids—nothing but smoke and Mamelukes; I saw the Emperor at Austerlitz—twing! how the bullets whizzed over the smooth ice! I saw, I heard the battle of Jena—dum, dum, dum—I saw, I heard the battles of Eylau, Wagram—no, I could hardly stand it. Monsieur Le Grand drummed till my own ear-drum was nearly cracked."

But a more wonderful day was yet to come, for History was all the time getting on in her seven-league

boots. Every day, nay, every hour, the French were upsetting boundaries and generally making havoc with the established order. As in the fairy tale, the Giant—that is, the people,—had awakened from his enchanted sleep, and the whole world was magically in motion. Murat, the bold Joachim, exchanged his spurs for the crown of Naples. This was in 1808. King Joachim thereupon ceded the Duchy of Berg to his lord and master, Napoleon, who transferred it to his brother, Louis, King of Holland. The pendulum was swinging back and the reign of liberty and equality was producing royalties with a vengeance. But some good came out of all this, and especially to the long persecuted Jews. (We are not to forget that Heine was himself a Jew.) In 1812 the Code Napoleon was extended to the German provinces under the French influence. The mists of the Middle Ages took flight. The Ghettos gave up their ghost.

It was in the palace gardens of Dusseldorf that young Heinrich saw the Emperor for the first time, the only sovereign to whom his republican conscience was ever to yield loyalty. Years afterward he painted the scene with the strong hues of his genius, so that we may see it through the boy's eager eyes:

“But what were my feelings when I saw him at last with my own eyes—O beatific vision—himself, the Emperor!

"It was in the *allee* of the palace gardens at Dusseldorf.

"As I shouldered my way through the gaping crowd, I thought of the deeds and battles which Monsieur LeGrand had portrayed for me with his drum; my heart beat the grand march—and yet I thought at the same time of the police regulations which ordered that no one should ride through the *allee*, under a penalty of five thalers. And the Emperor with his retinue rode right through the *allee*! The shuddering trees bowed down to him as he passed; the sunbeams peeped timidly through the green foliage, and in the blue heaven above there sailed into sight a golden star. He wore his plain green uniform and his small world-famous cap. He rode a white palfrey which stepped with such calm pride, with such assurance and dignity—had I been the Crown Prince of Prussia I should still have envied that pony! Carelessly, with a loose seat, the Emperor held up the reins in one hand, and with the other patted good-naturedly his horse's neck. It was a sunlit, marble hand, a mighty hand, one of those two hands that had tamed the hydra of anarchy and quelled the feud of nations. His face was of the same hue we see in the marble busts of Greeks and Romans; the features wore the same expression of calm dignity that the ancients have, and on them was written, 'Thou shalt have none other gods than me!'

"The Emperor rode calmly down the *allee*. Behind

him, on snorting chargers, bedizened with gold and jewels, rode his retinue. The drums beat, the trumpets blared. At my side mad Aloysius spun round and round, and clattered out the names of his generals; close by drunken Gumpertz bellowed, and the people shouted with a thousand voices, 'Long live the Emperor!'"

When Heine was sixteen his family thought to decide his vocation for him, and so he was sent to Frankfort-on-Main, where there was a ghetto, the sweet relish of which the poet never forgot.

He stayed there only a few weeks, and then Uncle Salomon, at Hamburg, tried his hand at making something other than a poet out of his nephew. Had Uncle Salomon possessed a little more imagination, he might have spared himself a humiliating failure. It was impossible to drum the commercial ABC into Heinrich's wayward head. Even his watch, as he tells us, had a habit of going wrong and getting into the hands of the Jews. To make matters worse, the graceless youth, for whose future Uncle Salomon would not have given a sixpence, committed the folly of falling in love with Uncle Salomon's beautiful daughter, Amelie. If Heine's cousin had been a less prudent and sensible girl, we should probably have lost a deal of fine poetry, for, of course they would have got married somehow, and Uncle Salomon would have paid

the bills until the end of the chapter. But Amelie was much of her father's mind. She gave her cousin small encouragement, and—a more cruel thing—even told him she did not like his poetry. In the end, and that was very soon, she married a young man of approved Hebrew descent and strictly commercial aspirations, whose name I haven't taken the trouble to remember.

The critics and biographers have generally deduced from this little passage in Heine's life that he carried through all the after years an incurable wound of the heart. It is vastly unpopular to doubt this, and ungallant in the bargain; but, though Heine suffered acutely from the disappointment of his first pure love, and though it yielded him many a lyric of exquisite pain, I am afraid it argues a misreading of the facts to impute to him a lifelong Wertherian anguish.

Leaving Hamburg with this bitter-sweet memory and finding in his sense of grief and loss, food for the lyrical impulse now maturing with his powers, Heine returned home to prepare himself for a profession. He entered the University of Bonn in 1819.

Napoleon being now at St. Helena, the hand was set back on the clock. So far as lay in its power, the Holy Alliance had undone the work of the Revolution. A Jew might not practise the profession of law—no profession, indeed, save medicine—in the Kingdom of Prussia; so nothing was left for Heine but to

apostatize or lay aside his ambition—which indeed was rather that of his family—to become *doctor juris*. Urged by his relatives and friends (who saw no harm in thus evading a barbarous prescription) he chose the former alternative. For this he has been unsparingly, though it seems to me unjustly, condemned by the rigorists of his own race. Heine himself affected to regard lightly the circumstance of his quasi-conversion to Lutheranism. With incomparable irony he tells us: "That I became a Christian is the fault of those Saxons who changed sides so suddenly at Leipzig; or else of Napoleon who need never have gone to Russia; or of the school-master who taught him geography at Brienne and neglected to tell him that it was cold in Moscow in winter. If Montalembert became minister and could drive me away from Paris, I would turn Catholic. Paris is well worth one mass!"

Within a very few years the enlightened government of Prussia paid this notable convert to the state religion the handsome compliment of interdicting his books. It is certain that Heine always bitterly regretted the concession he had made to a mediaeval prejudice. However lightly one may hold a traditional faith, one may choose an easier method of parting with it than by an act of formal and public apostasy. No man cared less than Heine for the anathemas of other men, yet he remained keenly sensitive to reproaches on this score. The degree of *doctor juris*

which cost him so dear brought him nothing. It was from Gottingen, by the way, he received this learned distinction—Gottingen which he has visited with some of the happiest strokes of his satirical genius.

Heine was a brilliant but irregular student. He was reading and rhyming poetry when he ought to have been busy with the Pandects.

So acute and native is the quality of his wit that the chronicle of his student days may be read to-day with interest as fresh as when it was first given to the world. Horace's *qualis ab incepto* is eminently true of Heine—he seems to have begun at once with an assured and individual style.

Prosing with professors over the Justinian Code came to an end at last. In his doctoral thesis Heine made a slip on the noun *caput*—the thesis was, of course, in Latin—and always remembered it with a twinge—which shows he was not entirely devoid of the pedantry of the place that he has so amusingly satirized. He had been previously rusticated from the University on account of a duel—his personal courage was then and ever after undoubted—and the pundits of the institution looked with small favor on the poetizing young Jew. Yet in the realm of letters, Gottingen is, and ever will be, better known from the residence of Heine than from any other circumstance in its venerable history. Hegel, by the way, owes to Heine the sole humorous association with his name.

To the readers of the Harzreise I need not recall the famous description of the town of Gottingen, "celebrated for its sausages and University;" or the happy application of the term Philistine, which has passed into universal currency.

It was in 1824 that Heine shook the dust of Gottingen from his feet and carried away much of its learned dust in his brain. Three years earlier his great idol Napoleon had died at St. Helena—"the saviour of the world" (was Heine's characteristic comment) "who suffered under Hudson Lowe, as it is written in the gospels of Las Casas, of O'Meara and of Antommarchi." And with what is perhaps the bitterest stroke of his unequaled irony, he added: "Strange, the greatest adversaries of the Emperor have already found an awful fate. Londonderry cut his throat; Louis the 18th rotted on his throne, and Professor Saalfeld is still professor at Gottingen!"

Seven years, rich with the outpouring of his genius followed from the day Heine left the classic precincts of Gottingen until he turned his face toward France and Paris. In the interval he had, in spite of the reigning sovereignty of the great Goethe, established his title as the first lyric poet of Germany.

Heine was proud to call himself a son of the Revolution, and such he was, in poetic as well as political impulse. But he was also a son of the free Rhine and

would make good his claim to the title. No man more fully appreciated the sacrifices made by the French people in the cause of human liberty. As a Jew, the descendant of a hated and persecuted race, he felt a special obligation of gratitude.

Criticism can take no account of the blemishes in Heine's character as a German or as a Jew. The measure of his literary accomplishment raises him above these things. This is the more just since Heine as a poet is eminently cosmopolitan. The note of provinciality is not in him. And this distinction belongs only to poets of the first class.

Notwithstanding, it is of great interest to study Heine in his relations of sympathy, his spiritual or racial touch with his own people. I have said that he shared deeply in the *Juden-Schmerz*, the great sorrow of Israel. "The history of the Jews," he tells us, "is tragical and yet if one were to write about this tragedy, he would be laughed at. This is the most tragic of all."

Heine wrote much and variously on this subject, constantly recurring to it, now with the broadest comic humor, now with awful pathos, and again dissembling his own pain with bitter irony, as in his note on Shakespeare's Shylock:

"I, at least a wandering dreamer of dreams, looked round me on the Rialto to see if I could find Shylock. I had something to tell him that would have pleased him—which was that his cousin Monsieur de Shy-

lock in Paris, had become the proudest baron in all Christendom and had received from their Catholic Majesties the Order of Isabella, which was originally established to celebrate the expulsion of the Jews and Moors from Spain. But I found him not in the Rialto, so I determined to look for my old acquaintance in the synagogue.

“Though I looked all round in the synagogue of Venice, I could nowhere see his face. And yet it seemed to me he must be there, praying more fervently than any of his fellow-believers with stormy, wild passion—yea with madness!—to the throne of Jehovah, the severe divine Monarch. I saw him not. But toward evening, when according to the belief of the Jews, the gates of Heaven are closed and no further prayer can enter, I heard a voice in which tears flowed as they were never wept from human eyes. There was a sobbing which might have moved a stone to pity—there were utterances of agony such as could only come from a heart which held within itself all the martyrdom that an utterly tormented race had endured for eighteen centuries. It was the death-rattle of a soul which nearing its death, sinks to the ground before the gates of Heaven. And this voice seemed to be well known to me—as if I had heard it long, long ago, when it wailed just as despairingly, ‘Jessica, my child!’”

Now for the other mood, and let us not forget that

with Heine the mood of the moment is supreme. We have but to take what the gods give us and be thankful. Also the strange mingling of irony, truth, humor and pathos is the chief mark of our poet's genius—the one thing in which he is least imitable.

“There lives at Hamburg, in a one-roomed lodging in the Baker's Broad Walk, a man whose name is Moses Lump. All the week he goes about in the rain and wind, with his pack on his back, to earn his few shillings. But when on Friday night he comes home, he finds the candlestick with seven candles lighted, and the table covered with a fine, white cloth. And he puts away from him his pack and his cares, and he sits down to table with his squinting wife, and yet more squinting daughter, and eats fish with them—fish that has been dressed in beautiful white garlic sauce; says therewith the grandest psalms of King David; rejoices with his whole heart over the deliverance of the Children of Israel out of Egypt; rejoices, too, that all the wicked ones who have done hurt to the Children of Israel have ended by taking themselves off; that King Pharaoh, Nebuchadnezzar, Haman, Antiochus, Titus, and all such villains are dead, while he, Moses Lump, is yet alive and eating fish with his wife and daughter! He contemplates his candles with satisfaction, but on no account will he snuff them for himself. And I can tell you, if the candles burn a little dim, and the snuffers-woman, whose business it

is to snuff them, is not at hand, and if Rothschild the Great were at that moment to come in—with his brokers, bill-discounters, agents, and chief clerks with whom he conquers the world—and were to say, ‘Moses Lump, ask me what favor you will and it shall be granted,’—I am convinced Moses Lump would quietly answer, ‘Rothschild, snuff me those candles!’ And Rothschild the Great would exclaim, ‘If I were not Rothschild, I would be Moses Lump!’”

Heine’s political sense was as sane and shrewd as his wit was keen. He has given us no better example of it than the following: “An Englishman loves Freedom as he loves his lawfully wedded wife. He regards her as a possession, and if he does not treat her with special tenderness, yet, if need be, he knows how to defend her. A Frenchman loves Freedom as he does his chosen bride; he will commit a thousand follies for her sake. A German loves Freedom as he does his old grandmother. And yet, after all, no one can tell, how things may turn out. The grumpy Englishman in an ill temper with his wife, is capable some day of putting a rope around her neck. The inconstant Frenchman may become unfaithful to his adored mistress and be seen fluttering about the Palais Royal after another. But the German will never quite abandon his old grandmother. He will always keep for her a nook by the chimney corner where she may tell her

fairy tales to the listening children. . . . ”

Save the Chinese, no people have excelled the Germans in attachment to the idea of kingship by divine right, with its related blessing of a hereditary aristocracy. It is still believed that such is the form of government most acceptable in the sight of Heaven, where once the socialists and republicans under Lucifer caused a serious insurrection, which was put down only after the greatest trouble by Michael, first of all legitimists. Hence the peculiar favor with which the good Lord is supposed to regard those earthly governments patterned upon the model established by Himself.

This was a favorite theme with our poet, who hated dulness and pretence, stupidity and intolerance wherever he found them, but most bitterly of all in the trappings of prescriptive authority. No stronger proof of German passivity could be adduced than that it seems to have withstood even the poisoned shafts of Heine’s satire and ridicule.

It is, however, not unusual to find the spirit of revolt most keenly alive under a general appearance of submission and compliance; so we need not doubt that there were hearts in Germany which eagerly treasured up Heine’s burning words against the mediaeval body-of-death under which the nation lay—alas! for the greater part, still lies.

Never did our poet preach the new gospel of dem-

ocracy with keener effect than in the following story taken, as he says, out of the life of Charles V.

“The poor Emperor was taken prisoner by his enemies and thrown into a wretched prison. I think it was in the Tyrol. He sat alone there in all his wretchedness, forsaken by all his knights and his courtiers, and no one came to help him. I do not know if in those days he had the curd-white face with which Holbein represents him in his pictures. But that prominent under-lip, the sign of a disdain for mankind, was then undoubtedly more protruding than in his pictures. He had good cause to despise the people who fluttered so devotedly around him in the sunshine of his good fortune, and who left him solitary in his obscurity and distress. Suddenly the prison door opened, and a cloaked man entered, and when the cloak was thrown aside the King recognized his faithful Kunz Von der Rosen, the court fool. This man brought him consolation and advice, and he was the court fool.

“‘Oh, German Fatherland! Oh, dear German people! I am thy Kunz Von der Rosen. The man whose peculiar office was to make the time pass for thee, and who only amused thee in thy good days, presses into thy prison in the time of thy misfortune. Here under my cloak, I bring thee thy strongest sceptre, thy beautiful crown. Do you not recognize me, my Emperor? If I cannot free thee, at least will I comfort thee, and thou shalt have some one near thee with whom thou

canst speak of thy direful sorrows, one who loves thee and whose best jokes and best blood are at thy service. For thou, my people, art the true Emperor, the rightful lord of thy land. Thy will is sovereign, and far more legitimate than that purple vested *tel est notre plaisir*, which invokes a divine right without any other warrant than the foolish prating of tonsured jugglers. Thy will, my people, is the only rightful source of power. Though thou liest yet in chains, thy right will assert itself at length; the day of thy deliverance approaches, a new era begins. My Emperor, the night is ended, and out there beyond the rosy glow of morning dawns!'

"Kunz Von der Rosen, my fool, you deceive yourself. You perchance mistake a glittering axe for the sun, and the morning glow is nought but blood.'

"No, my Emperor, it is the sun, though it rises in the west. For six thousand years, it has always risen in the east; it is now full time it should change its course.'

"Kunz Von der Rosen, my fool, thou hast lost the bells from off thy red cap, and it has now so strange an appearance, that red cap.'

"Alas, my Emperor, at the thought of my misfortunes I shook my head so furiously, that the fool's bells have fallen from my cap; but it is none the worse therefor.'

"Kunz Von der Rosen, my fool, what breaks and

cracks out there?"

"Be still! It is the carpenter's saw and axe, and the doors of your prison will soon be open, and you will be free, my Emperor."

"Am I really Emperor? Alas, it is the fool who tells me so!"

"Oh, do not sigh, my dear master. The air of the prison renders you fearful; when you are reinstated in your power you will again feel the hardy Emperor-blood coursing through your veins; you will be proud as an emperor, and arrogant, and gracious, and smiling, and ungrateful as princes are."

"Kunz Von der Rosen, my fool, when I am once more free, what wilt thou do?"

"I will then sew new bells on my cap."

"And how shall I recompense thy fidelity?"

"Ah! dear master, do not order me to be killed!"

In 1831 Heine took a long- meditated step and crossed the Rhine—the Jordan which, he said, separates the sacred Land of Freedom (France) from the Land of the Philistines (Germany). Beyond the attraction which Paris offered as the center of art and taste, the poet was actuated by other reasons, sufficiently cogent, in leaving the fatherland. I have noted how his prose writings had brought him under official censure. It was not at all unlikely that severer measures might be preparing for him. He had received a

hint, he tells us, that there were irons in the fortress of Spandau which would be uncomfortable wearing in the winter. No oysters, of which he was fond, were obtainable there, and there were no fowl, except flies, which had a habit of falling into the soup and thus making it more substantial. Moreover, the poet was strongly moved by the July revolution, in which Louis Philippe, the Citizen King, succeeded to the Bourbon, Charles the Tenth. The sun in Germany began to look to him like a Prussian cockade. "Oh, the grand week in Paris!" he exclaims. "The spirit of liberty which spread over Germany did, to be sure, sometimes overturn the night-lamps, so that the red hangings of some thrones were singed and the gold crowns grew hot under burning nightcaps. But the old catch-polls in the pay of the police soon brought out their fire-buckets, and they snuff about more watchfully than ever and forge stronger chains. And I notice that invisible walls, thicker than ever, are rising round the German people."

On the second day of May, 1831, he arrived in Paris. His reputation had preceded him, and gained for him the entree to the first literary circles. Heine was then in his thirty-second year, in the full vigor of health, and so handsome as to win from Theophile Gautier the title of the German Apollo. Among the notables who welcomed the poet to Paris were Meyerbeer, George Sand, Gautier, Michelet, Dumas, Sainte Beuve,

Quinet, Gerard de Nerval, Ludwig Boerne, Schlegel, and Humboldt. Heine's contentment in his new sphere, in the Capital of Intellect, far removed from the petty German censors, is best described by his own famous phrase to Ferdinand Hiller, the composer, returning to Germany. "If any of my friends ask about me," he said, "say I feel like a fish in water; or rather, when one fish in the ocean asks another how he is feeling, he gets the answer, 'I feel like Heine in Paris.'"

Heine, a born man of letters, as Matthew Arnold calls him, at once entered upon the second and more important period of his literary career. His letters to German newspapers, his reviews and other prose writings, put him in possession of an assured income. There was, besides, an allowance from Uncle Salomon—not a munificent one, indeed, but still useful and acceptable. It is said the poet was also, for a considerable time, in receipt of a pension from the French Government, and the story lent color to some unworthy aspersions cast upon him by his own countrymen. The fact seems to have been that Heine was carried on the list of foreign refugees whom the French Government assisted, through motives of policy. That the poet never performed a sinister service nor one in any way impeaching his integrity as a man and a patriot, was long ago made clear to his most invidious critics.

In the account which he drew up concerning his

estrangement from Ludwig Boerne—his fellow-countryman, and a zealous, if intemperate, patriot—Heine repudiated the charges above noted. “Do you hold out from the grave an imploring hand?” he cries. “I give you mine without malice. See how white and clean it is! It has never been soiled by the clasp of the mob or the gold of the people’s enemies.”

True, as it is, that Heine lacked stableness of purpose, he at least never abjured his liberal creed. Belonging to the aristocracy of mind, he was yet a leader and a prophet in the great democratic movement. With all his admiration for Napoleon, he was wont to say that he followed him absolutely only up to the 18th Brumaire. Heine’s political vision was marvelously keen and his deductions original and just. Scarcely any portion of his work is more interesting than the political reflections and observations injected into his “History of the Romantic School,” his “Religion and Philosophy in Germany” and sprinkled over his miscellaneous writings.

With his protean humor and fatal facility of satire, it was only to be expected that sooner or later, Heine would give mortal offence to most of his liberal friends, as well as many of his compatriots. The affair with Ludwig Boerne, which, after the apostasy, I would rather wipe out than any other passage in Heine’s life—drew him into a duel. There were other quarrels, hideously vulgar, and ah, how unworthy of

the high-strung sensitive poet! These are, however, only the shadows in the picture. A curious student may now, perhaps, by an effort recall the names of the men who quarreled with Heine on the score of backsliding in his political or religious faith. No one can estimate the immense influence which his writings have had in favor of liberal ideas in Germany and throughout the world. Not vainly nor with undue emphasis did he picture his life-long battle with the foes of liberty in his famous poem "Enfant Perdu":

In Freedom's War, of "Thirty Years" and more,
A lonely outpost have I held—in vain!
With no triumphant hope or prize in store,
Without a thought to see my home again.

I watched both day and night: I could not sleep
Like my well-tented comrades far behind,
Though near enough to let their snoring keep
A friend awake, if e'er to doze inclined.

And thus, when solitude my spirits shook,
Or fear—for all but fools know fear sometimes,—
To rouse myself and them, I piped and took
A gay revenge in all my wanton rhymes.

Yes! there I stood, my musket always ready,
And when some sneaking rascal showed his head,
My eye was vigilant, my aim was steady,
And gave his brains an extra dose of lead.

But war and justice have far different laws,
And worthless acts are often done right well;
The rascals' shots were better than their cause,
And I was hit—and hit again, and fell!

That outpost is abandoned: while the one
Lies in the dust, the rest in troops depart;
Unconquered—I have done what could be done,
With sword unbroken, and with broken heart.

In the year 1841 Heine wrote to his sister: "On the 31st of August I was married to Mathilde Creszentia Mirat, with whom I have quarreled every day these six years." The poet's union with the amiable French woman contributed to the small sum of happiness reserved for his last years. A terrible and insidious disease, consumption of the spinal marrow, showed itself as early as 1845, in a partial paralysis, which gradually extended over the whole system. Then in 1848 began for the stricken poet the tragedy of the mattress grave and the crown of an unexampled agony was added to the supreme laurel of poesy. Even as early as 1846 Heine wrote to his friend, Heinrich Laube: "If you do not find me here—faubourg Poissoniere No. 41—please look for me in the cemetery of Montmartre—not in Pere La Chaise, which is too noisy for me."

Our Heinrich was surely no saint, yet his awful sufferings brought to light in his character unsuspected

ed resources of firmness, sweetness and resignation. His chief anxieties were, first for his wife, that she should not be left by his death without a provision; and then, for his old mother in Germany, the "old woman by the Dammthor," (a gate of Hamburg) that she should not learn of his terrible misfortune. His woeful state was for some time needlessly embittered by the heartless conduct of his cousin Carl, who refused to pay an allowance promised by Uncle Salomon, now dead, but which the latter had omitted to provide in his will. Finally Carl yielded the point, but he first made terms with the poet relative to the latter's treatment of the Heine family in his memoirs; and it was further agreed that one-half of the allowance should be continued to the poet's widow.

Dark as was Heine's lot, in those terrible last years, the solace of his genius remained to him. With death at his pillow and the sentient world of light and life and joy shut out from him, his genius unconquered, yet rose to new heights—as if he would gather fresh laurels to be laid on his bier. "Like a dead man, the living poet was nailed in his coffin," writes Theophile Gautier, "but when we bent listening over him, we heard poetry ringing from under the pall."

But the poet himself is the best witness of his own agony. Listen:

"My body is so shrunken away that hardly anything but my voice is left, and my bed reminds me of

the sounding grave of the enchanter Merlin in the Broceliande forest in Brittany, under the tall oaks, whose tops rise like green flames into heaven. Ah, friend Merlin, I envy you those trees, with their cool breezes, for no green leaf flutters over my mattress grave in Paris."

Again: "I am no more a Hellene of jovial life and portly person, laughing cheerfully down on dismal Nazarenes—only a poor death-sick Jew!"

But not dead yet, no, not dead! For he cries out with the courage of immortal mind—"Though I am sick unto death, my soul has not suffered mortal hurt. It is a drooping and athirst, but not yet withered flower, which still has its roots firmly planted in the ground of truth and love."

And the terrible likeness he found for his affliction in the leper of the "Limburg Chronicle." Hear again: "In 1480, throughout all Germany, songs were sung and whistled that were sweeter and lovelier than any that were ever heard before in the German land. But, says the chronicle, a young priest who had the leprosy had written these songs, and had withdrawn himself from all the world into a desert. These lepers of the Middle Ages, thrust out from all human intercourse, wandered about, wrapped from head to foot, a hood over their faces, carrying a rattle called a Lazarus bell, with which they gave warning of their approach, so that all might draw aside from the way. Often in my

sad visions of the night, I think I see before me the poor priest of the 'Limburg Chronicle,' my brother in Apollo, and his suffering eyes gleam strangely from beneath his hood; but in a moment he glides away, and, like the echo of a dream, I hear the sharp tones of the Lazarus bell."

It is a strange picture called up by the sufferings of the poet—his mind triumphing over the decay of his body—his genius marking new achievements—his mordant wit and terrible irony active to the last. The ruling passion, strong even in death, was never more signally illustrated. His last word is a jest: "God will pardon me; it is his trade!"

But there is a relief to the tragedy of the mattress grave, which were else too painful to contemplate. The cheerfulness of the dying man, the amazing vigor of his mind, the undaunted bravery of his spirit—these may well detain us for a brief space before we turn away from that solemn scene.

To the doctor who asked him if he could whistle, using the French word which means also to hiss (*siffler*), the poet gasped, "Alas, no! not even a comedy of M. Scribe's." When Berlioz, the composer came to see him, shortly before the end, the poet exclaimed, "What! a visitor! Berlioz was always original!" And the good-natured Mathilde, often made the sport of his playful humor, contented herself with saying, placidly: "Very well, my dear, have your joke, but

you know you cannot do without me."

Once his Nonotte, as he called her, went out for a drive, and was gone so long that the poet pretended his first thought was that she had eloped from her sick husband with some cunning Lothario. Then he sent the nurse to her room to see if Cocotte, her pet parrot, was there. Yes, indeed, Cocotte was there, and his heart beat freely again. "For without Cocotte," he adds, with a touch of sly malice, "the dear woman would never leave me."

Well, she never did leave him, and, so far as we know, she never dreamed of such a thing, great as was her burden. Poor Mathilde! My heart goes out in sympathy to her who was so near the poet, and who is treated with such scant courtesy by the great man's biographers. I believe she suffered more than we know. She was not a literary woman, and she could not leave the world a memoir of that mattress grave tragedy, as did another woman whose presence at her husband's bedside brought him more comfort than it brought her. She could only retire, at odd times, when her care was not required by the sick man, and talk to her parrot, or, perhaps, cry softly to herself.

But the end of that long martyrdom was drawing near. Now the poet writes or dictates—for his sight is nearly gone and his paralyzed fingers cannot guide the pen: "My body suffers much, but my soul is as placid as a lake, and sometimes the most beautiful sun-

rises and sunsets are reflected in it." He makes his will, his latest thought anxious for poor Mathilde: "Farewell, thou German fatherland—land of riddles and sorrows; farewell, you kindly French people, whom I loved so much." Thus he fell asleep, February 17, 1856. The funeral was simple, without any religious ceremony, as the poet had desired. The mourners were Theophile Gautier, Alexandre Dumas the elder, Paul de St. Victor, and Mignet. Dumas wept; Gautier, seeing the great casket and the shrunken corpse, recalled the poet's own lines:

Do you know why the coffin
So heavy and wide must be?
Because in it I laid my love,
And with it my misery!

The poet was buried in Montmartre cemetery, according to his wish. Over his grave is a monument surmounted with a bust, bearing the inscription, "Henri Heine." Under the name of the Poet appear the significant words "Frau Heine," and on the sides of the stone are carved Heine's well-known verses in German, of which the following is an English version:

Where shall once the wanderer weary
Find his resting-place and shrine?
Under palm trees by the Ganges?
Under lindens of the Rhine?

Shall I somewhere in the desert
Owe my grave to stranger hands?
Or upon some lonely sea-shore
Rest at last beneath the sands?

'T is no matter! God's wide heaven
Must surround me there as here;
And as death-lamps o'er me swinging,
Night by night the stars burn clear.

The mother who had brought him into the world
which he filled with his fame, survived him three
years.

Heine, in his fine comparison of Goethe and Schiller, wrote: "Goethe's poems do not beget deeds as do Schiller's. Deeds are the children of the word and Goethe's fair words are childless. That is the curse of all that is the product of art alone."

Here is a profound truth by virtue of which Heine himself exercises a more vital influence than the sovereign of German literature. Heine, indeed, more potently represents his time, his aspiration, its revolt against tradition and dogma and all cramping prescription. Hence Matthew Arnold calls him the paladin of the modern spirit. The poet truly describes himself as a son of the Revolution. "Poetry has always been with me only a sacred plaything," he says. "I have ever placed but slight value on poetic fame,

and my future repute troubles me not at all. But if ye will do me honor, lay a sword upon my coffin lid, for I was a brave soldier in the war of the liberation of humanity!"

Doubtless it required more courage and self-sacrifice to live the life that Heine lived—no matter how often it fell below the mark—than to wear a gold chain and be chancellor at Weimar. It is a great distinction to be a great poet. Add to this the glory of leading and inspiring the onward march of humanity—of suffering also in that supreme cause—and the measure of earthly greatness is filled.

This crowning honor, I believe, cannot fairly be refused to the memory of Heinrich Heine.

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